

Relations industrielles Industrial Relations



Joseph LUFT : *Group Process. An Introduction to Group Dynamics*. 3rd ed., Alto, Cal., Mayfield Publishing Company, 1984, 237 pp., ISBN 0-87484-542-4

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On balance, however, Canadian industrial relations specialists ought to dash out and buy this book. Undoubtedly they will find in it much with which to quarrel, but they will profit from the encounter.

Anthony GILES

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Group Process. An Introduction to Group Dynamics, by Joseph Luft, Alto, Cal.: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1984, XII + 237 pp., 3rd edition, ISBN 0-87484-542-4

Basic dilemmas are fundamental to all groups. They include such questions as: control of members but avoidance of group membership becoming in attractive to them, good communication between various levels without sacrificing the goal attainment, socialization without too much suppression of individual initiative, effective role playing but avoidance of formulization. However, general group problems have only a limited validity and more may be achieved by gaining awareness of cultural and existential conditioning of people within *specific* groups. Within the individualistically oriented civilization group is a coalition serving people who remain members as long as this suits them for a variety of reasons. Within collectivistically oriented civilizations people perceive their own destiny through the microcosm of their 'reference group' and act in the fulfilment of specific duties. Situations of imminent danger brings people more together than situations of safety, which allow us to ignore others and concentrate on our own immediate affairs.

The group experience, reduced to only one civilization and ignoring the existential conditioning of human behaviour, excludes a universal perspective. This is exactly the shortcoming of this book which is supposed to present group dynamics but identifies the latter with the U.S. middle class world. Group morale based on pleasing everybody remains at a much more superficial level than the morale of committed people ready willingly or unwillingly, to fulfill a task of a major existential importance: rescue somebody, achieve jointly something very important, etc. Conflicts based on personal malaccommodation are much different from the conflicts arising from a foreign civilizational affiliation or a deep ideological commitment, Luft in his book does not pay attention to these dimensions; he is perfectly satisfied with a uncivilizational perspective and reduces the small group problems to the US middle class trivialities. For example he claims that «all relationships are confidential, unless explicitly modified» (p. 27) without acknowledging that this is actually valid to some cultures, and in other cultures the opposite may be true.

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Workplace Democratization. Its Internal Dynamics, by Paul Bernstein, New Brunswick, N.J., Transaction Books, 1983, 133 pp., ISBN 0-87855-711-3

The process of work democratization is a complicated enterprise in which the awareness of various interfering factors is of a great strategic importance. On the basis of a substantial case material, the author identifies the following crucial components: participation in decision-making (does there exist means for getting one's views frequently into decision-making bodies?), economic return to the participants based on the surplus they produce (are there any